

# Performance Shortfalls - Summary Table 4

Shown below by strategic goal and measure are brief explanations of significant deviations between actual and planned performance. Also provided are steps being taken to ensure goal achievement in the future.

Performance Shortfalls			
SUMMARY TABLE 4			
Strategic Goal #1: Restoration and Improved Quality of Life for Disabled Veterans			
	Measure	Target	Actual
Appeals resolution time			
Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) (Joint measure with C&P)		500 days	622 days
Causes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(a) Increased workload and (b) remands, which lengthen appeals resolution time and add to workload.</li></ul>		
Resolution Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>VA must eliminate avoidable remands and increase productivity to contain and reduce the appeals backlog.</li><li>VA is strengthening intra-agency partnerships: BVA's joint training efforts with VBA, OGC, and VHA will improve decision quality and reduce remands and appeals.</li></ul>		
Compensation and Pension (combined) rating-related actions – average days to process			
		145 days	167 days
Causes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The Veterans Claims Assistance Act of 2000 has significantly increased both the length and complexity of claims development.</li><li>Over the past several years, VBA has experienced a steady increase in workload – in claims receipts, claims complexity, and more direct contact with increasing numbers of servicemembers and veterans. For example, disability claims from returning war veterans, as well as from veterans of earlier periods, increased by 33 percent from 2000 to 2004. This steady increase continued in 2005 (+2 percent). Since 2003 – when VBA was successful in reducing the pending inventory – incoming claims, appeals, and all other associated claims and public contact workloads have continued to increase.</li><li>The ongoing hostilities in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the Global War on Terrorism in general, continue to increase the claims workload.</li></ul>		
Resolution Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>VBA is using a variety of management approaches to address the increased workload, including improvements in productivity and shifting work among regional offices in order to maximize resources and enhance performance, as well as simplifying and clarifying benefit regulations and ensuring claims processing staff members have easy access to manuals and other reference materials needed to process claims as efficiently and effectively as possible. In addition, VBA is evaluating staffing levels to ensure that rising workload challenges can be met.</li><li>Improved training is being emphasized so that employees will receive essential guidance, materials, and tools to meet the changing and increasingly complex demands on their decision-making responsibilities.</li></ul>		

## Performance Shortfalls

## SUMMARY TABLE 4

## Strategic Goal #2: Smooth Transition to Civilian Life

Measure		Target	Actual
<b>Average days to complete original education claims</b>		25 days	33 days
<b>Causes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Claims increased by more than 5 percent from 2004 to 2005 (+10,359 claims), coupled with the loss of several experienced claims examiners.</li> </ul>		
<b>Resolution Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VA will continue to develop process improvements, better workload forecasts, and resource estimates.</li> </ul>		
<b>Average days to complete supplemental education claims</b>		13 days	19 days
<b>Causes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supplemental claims increased by approximately 5 percent from 2004 to 2005 (+51,020 claims), coupled with the loss of several experienced claims examiners.</li> </ul>		
<b>Resolution Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VA will continue to develop process improvements, better workload forecasts, and resource estimates.</li> </ul>		
<b>Telephone Activities – blocked call rate (Education)</b>		22%	38%
<b>Causes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The increase in claims resulted in a concurrent increase in the number of phone inquiries. Inquiries rose by more than 40 percent in 2005, as compared to 2004. This situation was exacerbated by the loss of several experienced claims examiners.</li> </ul>		
<b>Resolution Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VA will continue to develop process improvements, better workload forecasts, and resource estimates.</li> </ul>		

## Performance Shortfalls

## SUMMARY TABLE 4

## Strategic Goal #3: Honoring, Serving, and Memorializing Veterans

Measure		Target	Actual
Rating-related pension actions—average days pending		69 days	83 days
Non-rating pension actions—average days pending		73 days	111 days
<b>Causes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Veterans Claims Assistance Act of 2000 has significantly increased both the length and complexity of claims development.</li> <li>Over the past several years, VBA has experienced a steady increase in workload – in claims receipts, claims complexity, and more direct contact with increasing numbers of servicemembers and veterans. For example, disability claims from returning war veterans, as well as from veterans of earlier periods, increased by 33 percent from 2000 to 2004. This steady increase continued in 2005 (+2 percent). Since 2003 – when VBA was successful in reducing the pending inventory – incoming claims, appeals, and all other associated claims and public contact workloads have continued to increase.</li> <li>The ongoing hostilities in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the Global War on Terrorism in general, continue to increase the claims workload.</li> </ul>		
<b>Resolution Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VBA is using a variety of management approaches to address the increased workload, including improvements in productivity and shifting work among regional offices in order to maximize resources and enhance performance, as well as simplifying and clarifying benefit regulations and ensuring claims processing staff members have easy access to manuals and other reference materials needed to process claims as efficiently and effectively as possible. In addition, VBA is evaluating staffing levels to ensure that rising workload challenges can be met.</li> <li>Improved training is being emphasized so that employees will receive essential guidance, materials, and tools to meet the changing and increasingly complex demands on their decision-making responsibilities.</li> <li>Pension maintenance activities (e.g., income adjustments) have been consolidated into three regional offices – Philadelphia, Milwaukee, St. Paul – over the last several years. Further consolidation of other pension work into these centers is now being reviewed.</li> </ul>		

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## Strategic Goal #3: Honoring, Serving, and Memorializing Veterans

Measure		Target	Actual
<b>Average number of days to process a claim for reimbursement of burial expenses</b>		42 days	57 days
<b>Causes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While the specific claims for burial expenses have not increased over the last few years, VBA has experienced a sharp growth in claims receipts (both rating and non-rating). Since 2000, overall claims receipts have risen by more than 12 percent. This growth also translates into an increase in such items as appeals and public contact workloads. In addition, the Veterans Claims Assistance Act of 2000 has significantly increased both the length and complexity of claims development.</li> </ul>		
<b>Resolution Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VBA is using a variety of management approaches to address the increased workload, including improvements in productivity and shifting work among regional offices in order to maximize resources and enhance performance, as well as simplifying and clarifying benefit regulations and ensuring claims processing staff members have easy access to manuals and other reference materials needed to process claims as efficiently and effectively as possible. In addition, VBA is evaluating staffing levels to ensure that rising workload challenges can be met.</li> <li>Improved training is being emphasized so that employees will receive essential guidance, materials, and tools to meet the changing and increasingly complex demands on their decision-making responsibilities.</li> </ul>		

## Enabling Goal: Applying Sound Business Principles

Measure		Target	Actual
<b>Percent of cases using alternate dispute resolution (ADR) techniques</b>		72%	9%
<b>Causes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At this time, the Department is uncertain as to the causes of the low percentage of cases using ADR. The Department offers ADR to all parties coming before the Board of Contract Appeals (BCA) as the preferred option for dispute resolution. Indeed, under the Contracts Disputes Act, BCA itself is a form of ADR in lieu of formal adjudications before federal courts. However, ADR is voluntary and the Department has not identified any intrinsic issue or concern that would account for parties' decreased ADR use in BCA cases.</li> </ul>		
<b>Resolution Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VA is developing strategies to promote increased use of ADR in resolving cases, including means for making disputants more aware of BCA-sponsored ADR and encouraging its use. For example, two strategies being developed are (1) increasing education and training of Department Contracting Officers and Contracting Officer Technical Representatives in the awareness and use of ADR and (2) updating Department policy and guidance on ADR use and practice.</li> </ul>		

## Performance Shortfalls

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## Enabling Goal: Applying Sound Business Principles

Measure			Target	Actual
Number of material weaknesses identified during the annual Financial Statement audit or identified by management			2	4
Causes			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a lack of compliance with established policies and procedures at field facilities.</li> </ul>	
Resolution Strategies			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VA will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Enhance monitoring controls over medical center financial and performance metrics reporting.</li> <li>➤ Educate and enforce accountability of medical center directors and other supervisory personnel having responsibility for accurate financial reporting and promoting timely and thorough follow up.</li> <li>➤ Improve compliance of controls on the review and approval of transactions.</li> <li>➤ Establish testing of compliance with VA policies and procedures.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

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